

WALK AUDIT REPORT – BRITTANY HILLS

INTRODUCTION

About Healthy Places

The mission of the Healthy Places program is to enhance healthy and active living. We do this through the policies and practices that impact how we build the places we live, work and play. These "Healthy Places" make it easier to be more active as part of everyday life.

The Healthy Places program works to create a built environment that encourages walkability, bikeability and physical activity through community design processes such as land use and transportation planning. The built environment includes the physical elements added to the natural environment to create our community, like our buildings, road systems, parks, neighborhoods, civic buildings, and schools.

About Walk Audits

A Walk Audit (also called a walk study or walkability assessment) looks at the streets, sidewalks, and physical activity spaces in your neighborhood to find the best walking route. Things like where you feel safest walking and where people like walking the most help plan the route. This information is then used to create a walking map of the area for residents and visitors.

Walk Audits are conducted with residents of the neighborhood or employees of a local business interested in improving the walkability of their community. The Walking Programs Manager from Columbus Public Health leads the Walk Audit, which can take between 1-2 hours to complete.

Walk Audits are also an important way to share community concerns about neighborhood conditions with City of Columbus, area leaders, and other community members.

How Walk Audits Are Used

The Healthy Places Program uses a Walk Audit Tool and Survey to assess the design of Columbus neighborhoods for walking and being active. Walk Audit Reports are posted online and shared with staff from the City of Columbus Departments of Development, Recreation & Parks, Public Safety, and Public Service.

Neighborhood residents can use the contents of these reports, as well as the guidance contained in the Resident's Guide to Neighborhood Traffic Issues (found online at <https://columbus.gov/publichealth/programs/Safe-Communities/CAPS-Resident-s-Guide-to-Neighborhood-Traffic-Issues/>) to advocate for improvements to the built environment in their area. While some issues like sidewalk condition are often the responsibility of local property owners, there are many things that the City of Columbus can assist with in improving walkability in our communities, but active and engaged residents are critical to ensuring that the most important issues are brought to the attention of the appropriate departments and properly addressed.

WALK AUDIT RESULTS

Walk Score (www.walkscore.com)



Brittany Hills is a Car-Dependent neighborhood

Most errands require a car.

The online tool Walk Score provides ratings of walkability that are based on closeness to nearby destinations. The system calculates walking routes to various destinations, giving maximum points to destinations that can be reached within 5 minutes, decreasing scores for destinations further away, and giving no points for destinations outside of a 30 minute walk. Factors such as population density, block length, and intersection density are also included to provide a rating of pedestrian friendliness.

Brittany Hills receives a Walk Score rating of 27 on a scale of 0 to 100, meaning that it is a car-dependent neighborhood. Because this rating is calculated based on proximity to destinations, it does not actually reflect the “comfortability” of walking in the neighborhood, only what resources residents can access by walking. The walkability of the neighborhood for recreation is addressed more specifically in the walk audit.

Walking Assets – Summary

- New sidewalk project on Brentnell Avenue
- Neighborhood cut-throughs to South Mifflin Elementary and Eastern Glen development
- Access to Alum Creek Trail at improved pedestrian crossing
- All neighborhood streets (except Mock and Sunbury) have sidewalk on at least one side
- Mock Park and Brentnell Community Center border the neighborhood to north and south
- Historic nature of neighborhood – AmVets Housing in Argyle and Vendome section of neighborhood; Underground Railroad corridor along Alum Creek, including Christian Heyl House at 1891 Sunbury Road

Walking Challenges – Summary

- Trees have broken/lifted sidewalks, in particular along Jeri Ave and Joi Ave
- Curb ramps not present at many intersections
- Sidewalk gaps along Joi Ave, Bar Harbor Rd, and Brocton St
- No sidewalks along much of Sunbury and Mock Roads, both high speed corridors, unsafe to walk
- No safe pedestrian crossing to Mock Park
- Pedestrian path to Eastern Glen is overgrown and includes fence as a barrier
- Grocery and shopping destinations on Mock Rd are mostly vacant

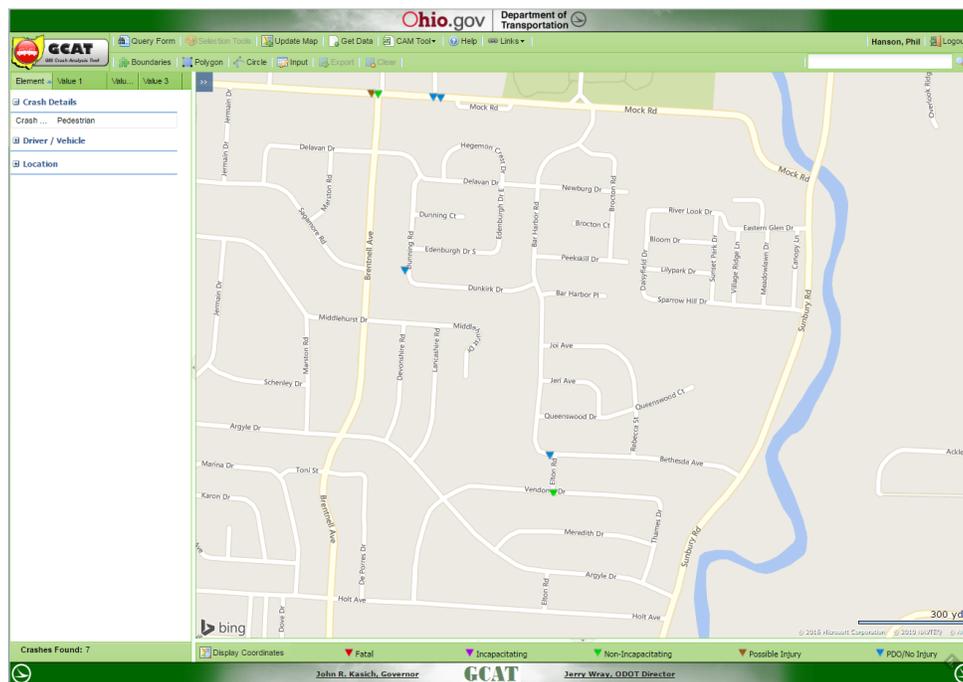
Sidewalk Inventory

| | Length | Percent of Total |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Sidewalk on both sides | 4.5 miles | 45% |
| Sidewalk on only one side of street | 3 miles | 30% |
| No sidewalk | 2.7 miles | 27% |
| Total roadway length | 10.1 miles | 100% |

Internal streets in Brittany Hills have excellent sidewalk coverage, and 75% of streets have sidewalk on at least one side. The only two streets with large stretches of no sidewalk are Mock Road and Sunbury Road. There is a short segment of Mock Road from Brentnell to Mock Park that has a sidewalk, and there is a path that leads from Bethesda Ave to the Alum Creek Trail along Sunbury Road, but otherwise these two roads have very limited pedestrian facilities.

Pedestrian Crashes 2011-2016

Using the Ohio Department of Transportation GIS Crash Analysis Tool (GCAT) (located at <http://gcat.dot.state.oh.us/CrashWebHome.aspx>), all pedestrian-involved crashes in Brittany Hills were reviewed for available data 2011-2016. Over that time, there were seven crashes reported, none of which were reported as serious injuries.



With a small number of crashes reported and no serious injuries, there is not a major safety concern for pedestrians in the Brittany Hills neighborhood. Since two of the crashes occurred crossing Mock Road at Brentnell Avenue, and two more at Mock Road and Century Drive, the Mock Road corridor should be considered the highest priority for safety improvements. A new sidewalk project on Brentnell Avenue is installing curb ramps at the crossing and should improve the intersection somewhat.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Requests to 311

The City of Columbus' 311 system allows residents to submit requests for City Services through a single point of contact. The system is available Monday to Friday 7 AM – 6 PM by phone at (614) 645-3111, or online at 311.columbus.gov

A number of the issues with walkability in a neighborhood can be reported to 311 for investigation and response by the City. For the Brittany Hills neighborhood, the particular issues best served by reporting to 311 are below:

- Sidewalks broken or lifted up by City tree roots
- Curb ramps needed at intersections
- Gaps in the sidewalk that need to be filled
- Crosswalks needed at intersections or mid-block
- Clearing of brush and overgrowth along pathways

Reporting of an issue to 311 is not a guarantee it will be addressed in the manner requested, but it will ensure that the issue is reported to the appropriate personnel and reviewed. The resolution of a 311 request can be viewed online after it is reported.

Requests to Area Commission

For issues not resolved by reports to 311, requests can be made to the local area commission. The area commissions are intended to serve as a liaison between the neighborhood residents and developers or city officials. Commission meetings are held regularly and are open to the public.

Area Commissions serve a role in community planning and allocating funding from the City. The Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund (UIRF) engages Area Commissions to identify and address capital improvement needs in Columbus' central neighborhoods. Projects are currently planned for the cycle from 2015-2019, but engagement with the Area Commission can impact project prioritization and future planning efforts.

The North Central Area Commission serves the Brittany Hills neighborhood, as well as some of the surrounding neighborhoods to the south and west. Meetings of the commission are held on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Tray Lee Center located at 1362 Sigsbee Avenue. The Neighborhood Liaison for the City of Columbus is Dick Graham, who can be reached at 614-645-7371.

Requests to the Transportation and Pedestrian Commission

If an issue related to traffic or pedestrian safety cannot be resolved by reporting it to 311, or by bringing it before the local area commission, it can be brought to the Columbus Transportation and Pedestrian Commission (TPC). The TPC is an official advisory body to the director of public service and Columbus city council. They address matters related to: transportation; bicycle and pedestrian safety; parking and stop-sign, traffic control, and speed-limit policies.

Meetings are open to the public and typically held the second Tuesday of every month at 5:00PM in the Beacon Building, 50 W. Gay Street, Ground Floor, Conference Room B. Meeting agendas and past minutes can be found at <https://www.columbus.gov/TPC/>

Additional Neighborhood Engagement

There are some projects that will be best served by engaging other residents within the neighborhood and other organizations within Columbus, rather than directly engaging with the City itself. In Brittany Hills, the history of the AmVets housing along Argyle and Vendome, and the importance of Alum Creek and the Christian Heyl house to the Underground Railroad are significant pieces of the neighborhood's history that ought to be preserved and celebrated.

The first step in preserving the history of Brittany Hills starts with local residents forming a coalition to support that preservation effort. Once residents have established their goals, such as having historical markers placed or designating a building as historic, the next step is to seek funding or institutional support for the plan. Ohio History Connection (formerly the Ohio Historical Society) maintains a list of funding sources that includes grants specifically for historical markers, preservation projects, and many other related programs. (<https://www.ohiohistory.org/OHC/media/OHC-Media/Documents/HistoricPreservationFundingSources.pdf>)

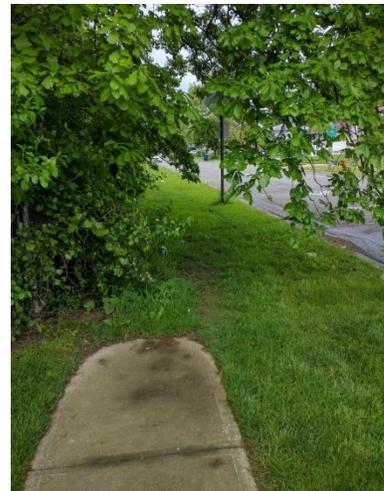
The Columbus Landmarks Foundation also provides resources for preservation efforts and technical assistance for communities and property owners who require it, and can direct communities toward the appropriate resources for their specific preservation project. Other institutions, such as Ohio Dominican University, can be great resources and sources of funding as well.

AUDIT PHOTOS

Sidewalks



Some sidewalks, especially those along Jeri Avenue and Joi Avenue, have been broken or pushed up by tree roots. Especially for those with limited mobility, limited vision, or other disabilities, this presents a hazard and can prevent the safe use of neighborhood sidewalks.



Intersections around the neighborhood often do not have curb ramps, limiting the mobility of people with disabilities. Additionally, sidewalk gaps exist in a few locations around the neighborhood, or sidewalk only exists on one side of the street.

Safety

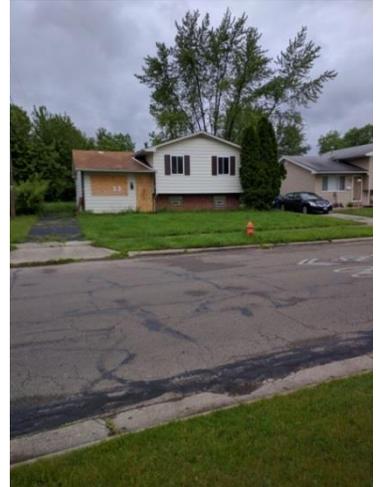


The areas of greatest concern for pedestrian safety are along Mock Road and Sunbury Road. Traffic along these roads travels very quickly, and there are no sidewalks. The crossing of Mock at Brentnell Avenue is being improved with curb ramps, but currently has no crosswalk or other improvements. There is no crossing directly to Mock Park, a popular community destination, or the charter school adjacent to the park.



Crossings on Bar Harbor Road and Joi Avenue leading to South Mifflin Elementary, and on Sunbury Road at the Alum Creek Trail are assets to the community and examples of good pedestrian infrastructure at key locations.

Community



A few vacant properties are scattered through the neighborhood, but mostly in the commercial corridor along Mock Road and the entrance to Brittany Hills at Brentnell Ave. The properties are not derelict, but bringing in more businesses next to the neighborhood and ensuring that vacant homes do not deteriorate will improve the neighborhood's livability for all. Unfortunately, the Save-a-lot grocery store adjacent to the neighborhood recently closed and now sits vacant, limiting the availability of fresh and healthy foods for neighborhood residents.



Brittany Hills does have many community assets, including a number of churches, the historic Grand Valley Dale Ballroom, and South Mifflin Elementary School. The school is located centrally in the neighborhood, with pedestrian connections for children to walk to school. At the intersection of Sunbury and Mock Roads, the neighborhood is also home to the historic Christian Heyl house, a stop on the Underground Railroad, which followed the Alum Creek corridor north.

Recreation



Brittany Hills is surrounded by multiple opportunities for recreation. To the north, Mock Park provides green space, a recreation center, and a walking path. The Alum Creek Trail follows the creek along the eastern side of Brittany Hills, and stretches north to Westerville and south to Three Creeks Metro Park. The trail is accessible at an improved pedestrian crossing on Sunbury Road. Brentnell Community Recreation Center is located to the south of the neighborhood, also easily accessible to residents of Brittany Hills.